I Spent the Night with Superman

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I Spent the Night with Superman

by goldenraeofsun

Summary

Determined to be the first journalist to score an interview with Metropolis' newest hero, Lois has jumped off The Daily Planet's roof, The Galaxy Building, and now, Schuster Bridge.

"You cannot keep doing this," Superman lectures as they rise above the churning river.

"Well, it's not like I can look you up in the yellow pages," she says sensibly. The wind whips around them, and she surreptitiously spits a few hairs out of her mouth.

Superman doesn't crack a smile. "This is unbelievably reckless behavior."

"You must not be familiar with my work," Lois says wryly.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“We have got to stop meeting like this,” Lois shouts over the wind whipping at the top of Schuster Bridge. She surreptitiously spits a few hairs out of her mouth.

Superman just frowns down at her. “That seems very much up to you, Miss Lane –”

A heady shiver courses down her spine at the sound of *that* voice saying her name. She tries not to let it show on her face.

“ – since you’ve been determined to launch yourself off higher and higher edifices to orchestrate a meeting between us.”

“Well, it’s not like I can look you up in the yellow pages,” she reasons.

He doesn’t crack a hint of a smile. “This is unbelievably reckless behavior.”

“You must not be familiar with my work,” Lois says wryly.

Superman purses his lips. “Unfortunately, I am.”

Lois blushes furiously, and she silently curses her pale complexion that makes her face feel like it’s on fire. Because *Superman* himself knows her work. Holy hell.

“But,” he continues seriously, “you can’t expect that I can drop everything to catch you every time.”

“Of course I don’t,” she protests. “I’m a member of the press, Superman. Did you really think it’s a coincidence that I’ve always sought a meeting after a natural or man-made disaster *and* the recovery effort is over?”

They drop ten feet in midair, and Lois bites back a yelp of alarm.

When she raises her eyes from the river churning below them, she finds a strange, dare she say it, *impressed*, look on his face. “Come on,” she says impatiently, “I may be ambitious and, yes, reckless, but I’m not suicidal or heartless.” She shrugs. “Obviously the masses need you more than I need an interview – for most hours of the day. Not all of them, though.”

Superman’s expression turns thoughtful.

“And, hey,” she adds brightly, “I’ll put a kibosh on the jumping off

bridges if you'll finally grant me thirty minutes of quotes on the record," she says, trying to stay professional and keep the naked hope out of her voice.

And then… he *nods.*

Lois slams a lid down on her squeal of excitement. She attempts to turn it into a ladylike cough instead, but she doesn't quite succeed based on the way the corners of his mouth curve a fraction upwards.

"One interview," he says as his electric blue eyes bore into hers, "and you stay at sea level for the foreseeable future. Agreed?"

Lois swallows. She is an accomplished journalist. She went from intern to junior reporter in under six months. She went from junior reporter to the youngest member of the Metro team within a year. She won a Worth Bingham in April. She squarely holds Superman's gaze as she intones gravely, "Agreed."

Superman nods and turns to the horizon. The wind ruffles Lois's hair as they gently turn eastward, and Lois jerks to attention as the giant globe comes into view. "Not The Planet!" she yelps.

Superman glances down at her in surprise. "No?"

She vehemently shakes her head. "Where anybody and their mother can hear us and get *my* scoop? Hell no."

Superman's smile widens. "Is the newspaper industry really that cutthroat?"

"You have no idea," Lois says darkly as she hunches in arms, like she can avoid the prying ears if they can't see her. "I'd be just my luck if Clark –" She shuts her mouth with a snap. Nope. Not the time. Definitely not a story to share with Superman, Metropolis's newfound savior and, quite possibly, the most powerful being on the planet.

"Clark?" Superman repeats.

Dammit.

Over her cagey silence, he prompts, "A colleague of yours?"

Lois scowls. "My partner," she says begrudgingly.

Superman makes a noncommittal humming noise. "I didn't know you had a partner."

Lois flushes. God, she'll never get over the fact that *Superman* has read her articles. "He's new," she says curtly. "Started at The Planet earlier this year."

Superman glances down at her, his eyebrows rising. "Not a fan, I take it?"

Lois retreats back down in his arms, this time out of embarrassment. Her lips thin as desperately thinks through the best way to explain Clark Kent to Superman. The truth is, Lois likes Clark just fine. He's a nice guy. Surprisingly beefy under those lumpy blazers and baggy khakis, which Lois can always get behind. But Lois has always been a better journalist than human being, so she's cut Clark off at the knees more than he deserved and stolen his byline once or twice.

Okay, most recently this week –

Yesterday. She stole his story yesterday.

"Clark Kent," she says slowly, "is a nice guy."

"Damning with faint praise, I see," Superman says, his voice unbearably dry.

Lois grimaces. Ugh, fuck Clark Kent, and the tractor he rode in on. Huffily, she explains, "No,Clark really is a nice guy. The type to hold the elevator door for you, and pull you aside if you have lipstick on your teeth." Both of which happened last week. "He's actually *too* nice," Lois continues. "And I keep telling him to toughen up or the job will eat him alive, but he's stubborn too, and it's not sinking in. Anyway, I taught him a – a harsh lesson yesterday, and, well, I wouldn't blame him if he was looking for revenge or something." Internally, she cringes as the lie slips out. Clark is as likely to seek revenge as Batman is to whip off his cowl on the 11PM news report and start a conga line.

"Then he doesn't seem like much of a nice guy if you were only trying to help him," he says reasonably.

Lois grimaces. " *Help* is a strong word."

The whole stolen, sordid story with Clark sits on the tip of her tongue, and with literally any other potential source, Lois would bury everything deeper than Atlantis. Her sources have to think she's infallible – a pillar of journalistic integrity that would never jeopardize any of the information they give her.

But this is *Superman.* And she has no idea if it's his inhumanly handsome face or his righteous presence that makes the obfuscation about Clark churn uncomfortably in her gut. "I taught him a lesson about who to trust in this business."

Superman casts a cool gaze down at her, and her shame threatens to swallow her whole. "You've always struck me as a pretty trustworthy person, Miss Lane."

Oh my god. She's going to *die.*

She groans. "I am! Usually! But I don't know, something about Clark brings out the worst in me. I have no idea *why,"* she says, fully aware she's oversharing but unable to stop herself under the microscope of his full attention. "He's like the least intimidating person I've ever met, and he's never so much as moved my *office chair* without asking first."

"So you regret how you acted?"

Lois grimaces. Was she wrong? No. Should she have done it? Probably also no. "I suppose," she says in a low voice, and the words feel like they're coated with barbed ware on the way out of her mouth.

Far below them, orange street lights pop on as, around them, the yellow office lights shut off. Lois suppresses a shiver as the sun starts to dip below the horizon. The sounds of late rush-hour Metropolis echo around them – the ever-present wail of far off sirens, the distant whir of a helicopter, and, of course, the snap of Superman's cape in the wind.

Eventually, he says, "Putting aside his personality, is he a good reporter?"

Lois hesitates at the change of subject. "One of the best I've ever seen. A bit rough around the edges and ridiculously idealistic, but," she shrugs, "he mostly makes it work."

Superman nods once, satisfied. "Do you think you might feel threatened by him?"

"Threatened? By Clark Kent?" she scoffs. *"Please."*

Sure, Clark is a good writer. And his aw-shucks-I'm-a-country-rube routine has gotten sources to open up in record time. He can spell; he's infuriatingly talented at spelling. And everyone in the office *likes*

him. Lois is the better journalist, no doubt about that. But in terms of office politics, she's not winning any popularity contests. Most of the office tolerates her for her talent. She's driven; she's uncompromising; she's ambitious – all ugly traits in a woman, she's been told. Fine with her. She isn't climbing the career ladder to be liked or find a husband.

But she'd bet her future Pulitzer that Clark would win Mr. Congeniality in a heartbeat.

As she chews on her lip, Superman shrugs. "Just an outsider's point of view."

Lois turns away. "Can you please set me down here?"

"Here?" Superman asks in surprise as he scans the roof fifty feet below them. "Did you change your mind about having our interview at The Planet?"

Lois throws him an incredulous look. "You still want to do the interview?" She leaves the '*with me'* unsaid. Sure, she would kill the interview right here, right now. But she has pointed her mic at enough mayors, governors, and corporate executives to know that if the vibes are off, the quotes will suffer. Sometimes that's the point – especially if she's nailing them for corruption or lying on the record. But Lois has a very clear goal with this interview, and any antagonism or hesitancy won't do at all.

Superman cocks his head. "Why wouldn't I?"

"I don't know," Lois says exasperatedly. "Because I'm a shitty coworker?"

Superman's expression softens. "You're only human."

Lois rolls her eyes. "Says the alien."

Superman's mouth twists, his face unreadable. "Then I would have the most impartial view, wouldn't I?"

Lois shoots him a dirty look. "Your determination to see every glass half full could rival Kent's."

Instead of being put off at her hostility, he says gently, "I want to do the interview with you, Miss Lane."

Christ, there go those shivers again. She deliberately tamps down on

her insane urge to fix her hair or, god forbid, *giggle.* So not the time.

“You seem like the type who could bring out my humanity, so to speak,” he adds.

“Apparently I am the expert,” Lois deadpans.

“So, if we’re not doing the interview at The Planet, where would you suggest?” he asks as he casts his gaze around the darkening city around them.

“My place,” Lois says. “My balcony has a great view –” she breaks off, flushing. Who was she to brag about a view to a being who could be standing at the top of Mount Everest in three seconds flat?

But Superman just smiles. “Well, then, I can’t miss it, can I?”

* * *

“So, Superman,” Lois says as she sets two glasses of water in front of them (he’d declined a stronger drink) on her patio table, “thank you for sitting down for an interview.”

He immediately adopts a much more serious expression, except for his eyes, which twinkle in the dimming light. “It’s my pleasure, Miss Lane.”

She clicks on her trusty recorder and opens her notes on her phone . “The people have been asking for your story ever since we saw you lift that car and rescue that little boy. Let’s start by getting some facts straight. Is it true you’re an alien?”

“I am,” Superman says. “I come from the planet Krypton.”

“Kryp-ton,” Lois repeats slowly. “Krypton, with a C-R-I-” she says as she types it out to look up later.

“K-R-Y,” Superman gently corrects, “P-T-O-N.”

“Oh,” Lois breathes, blushing furiously as she jams the backspace icon with her index finger. “Of course.”

“And why did you decide to come to Earth?” Lois asks. “Leaving your planet behind, that’s a big decision. Were you looking for adventure? Or running away from something – or someone?” She grins. “Should we keep an eye out for a superwoman scorned one of these days?”

“My home planet was dying,” Superman says bluntly as Lois’s jaw drops. Horror washes over her. He continues, “I could stay for the extinction, or take a chance on a planet no Kryptonian had ever been to.”

Lois raises both hands to cover her mouth.

“My father was a revered scientist,” Superman says over her stunned silence, “and he predicted Krypton’s destruction with no time to spare. By the time Krypton was collapsing, he had only finished one ship, and my parents selflessly put me in it instead of them. As far as I know, I’m the only Kryptonian to survive the destruction.”

“Oh my god,” Lois breathes. “I’m – I’m so sorry.”

Superman swallows. “Thank you.” He exhales a slow breath. “I’m still coming to full terms with what it all means myself.”

Lois lets Superman collect himself as her mind whirrs with follow up questions. She dismisses each and every one as too insensitive, too grim, too irrelevant, until: “Why did you become a superhero?” she asks. “After all that, with all your powers, you could literally do anything here on Earth. Rot in bed for years. Become a billionaire. Go on reality television.” She leans forward. “Why be *Superman* ?”

He doesn’t answer at once. Brow furrowing in thought, he taps one finger against his chin for a few seconds.

Lois doesn’t rush him. Instead, she studies her prepared questions, helpfully grouped by subject.

HISTORY

MISSION

POWERS

VITALS

She looks back up to find him staring at her. A frisson zips across her skin under his gaze, and she blushes. “Just reviewing my notes,” she says. “Carry on.”

He offers her a small, genuine smile, and Lois violently squashes every single one of the feral butterflies knocking around in her chest.

“I put on the cape because I believe humanity deserves saving,”

Superman says firmly.

Lois raises her eyebrows. “Is that right?” she asks because, personally, she disagrees. Humanity sucks. They lie, cheat, and steal. They kill each other for stupid reasons. They kill each other for zero reasons – just read any headline in The Gotham Gazette.

Humans, though, humans as individuals are interesting. Bright spots, genuinely good people are as rare as drivers who use their turn signals on Siegel Boulevard. *Their* stories were the ones that drove Lois into journalism.

But Lois is a realist. Death, sex, and violence sell papers, and Lois can’t say she doesn’t relish sinking her canines into the darker side and drag it, kicking and screaming, into the light for proper trial in the court of public opinion. Those stories will build her career and do real work in making the world a better place. Puff pieces about rescuing cats from trees get relegated to *Uplifting News We All Fucking Need This Week* listicles.

So Superman, a man who can bring death and violence (jury’s out on the sex part) at an untold magnitude but *doesn’t* because he’s too busy rescuing cats from trees – well, he might as well be super-powered catnip to Lois Lane.

Superman nods. “Humans are capable of such good. I have to help them.”

“Hm,” Lois hums because this isn’t a debate; it’s an interview. He promised her 30 minutes, but that doesn’t mean she’s going to get them all if she pisses him off by loudly disagreeing with his whole worldview. That’s for another time when the stakes aren’t so high. If Lois gets her way (and she usually does), this won’t be her last interview with Superman.

“You disagree?” he asks.

Her eyes narrow. “Mind reading isn’t on your list of known powers.”

He chuckles. “I can’t read your mind, Miss Lane –”

She releases a barely-there exhale of relief. Thank god for that.

“ – you just have a very expressive face.”

“I do not,” she blurts before her brain catches up with her words.

Superman holds up his hands. “That’s not a bad thing!”

“Of course it is,” she counters. “I’m supposed to be a professional.”

“And that means being a blank slate?” Superman asks, clearly amused. “You can be professional and opinionated.”

Lois huffs. “Not as a woman.”

Superman frowns. “Who says?”

Lois goggles at the sheer *alienness* of that statement. “Clearly you haven’t been on Twitter lately.”

Slowly, Superman shakes his head. “I’ve tried to stay off social media in a public capacity.”

On her phone, Lois types the word *PUBLIC ??!?*

He adds, “I think your op-eds have been some of your best writing.”

Lois’s head jerks up to stare at him, wide-eyed. She’s written fewer than five of those, all when Perry had too much white space on the page and less than three hours before they had to put the paper to bed. Because, if there’s anything Lois Lane is good at, it’s running her mouth on a deadline.

“You have opinions,” Superman says earnestly. “They’re worth sharing.”

It feels like a small supernova goes off behind her sternum. Heat surges through her entire body, enveloping her face in record time, and leaves her fingers and toes tingling. Jesus fucking Christ, she has *got* to get a grip. Focus, Lane. Focus.

She gives herself a little mental shake and pinches her thigh under the table. But the pain does nothing to bring her down from riding high off *that* compliment from *that* man. “Thank you.” She coughs, trying to clear her mind and her throat at the same time. “You mentioned social media in a public capacity. Does that mean that you have a private presence on social media?”

Lips pursed, Superman gaze flicks down to her recorder, up to her, and back down to the recorder. “Off the record?” he asks, and Lois can practically *hear* Cat salivating at this piece of gossip.

She clicks the recorder off without a second thought. “Off the record,”

she confirms.

“I use it to watch cat videos,” Superman says with a shrug.

“Oh my god,” Lois breathes, unable to keep an incredulous giggle out of her voice. “Are you for real?”

Superman smiles. “We had animal-like dogs back on Krypton, but nothing like cats.”

Lois has no idea what to do with that information except smile dopily at him. Superman watches *cat videos* in his spare time.

After a long pause, he suggests, “We can go back on the record now.”

“What? Oh yeah,” Lois hits the record button. “So, Superman, this mission of yours. It’s just to help us humans?”

“What else would I do?” Superman asks, his brow furrowing in genuine puzzlement.

“Plenty of pundits and politicians have suggested a more nefarious reason behind your actions.” She taps her phone screen and flips through her notes. “Everything from greed, to narcissism, to worldwide domination.”

Superman’s face hardens to stone. “That is ridiculous.”

She hums. “And yet the rumors persist.”

“They are unfounded,” he says, his electric blue eyes flashing.

“Crime has risen in Metropolis since your first recorded appearance,” Lois points out. “Do you coordinate with the MPD? The governor? The federal government?”

Superman’s expression hardens. “Not as of yet, no.”

“What’s your hesitation?”

He sighs. “Look, I’m not here to be political –”

“By definition, vigilantism is a political act.”

“I’m not a vigilante –”

“So you wouldn’t call yourself,” she glances down at her notes, “‘an

individual who acts outside of legal authority, often violently, to punish or avenge a crime or right a perceived wrong'?"

Superman shifts in his chair, and Lois keeps her gaze steady as she stares him down, waiting for his answer. "I," he starts, far more restrained than his previous answers, "am just trying to do some good in the world. Like yourself. Your entire job is getting the truth out and pursuing justice through the media." He chews his lip, and Lois watches, fascinated. She's never seen him this agitated out of battle. "I suppose mine is the same, only a bit more hands-on."

"Truth and justice," she repeats dubiously, "that's what you're all about?"

"Truth and justice," he repeats. "You can quote me on that." He studies her, and she suppresses the urge to fidget under his gaze. "Why do *you* do what you do, Miss Lane?"

Seriously? He's turning the question back on her? One of the oldest tricks in the books. She purses her lips and answers him anyway, "Because it's the right thing to do. Because it makes the world better. Because my designer shoe budget can't come from thin air."

"There you go," Superman says with a wave of his hand in her direction. "That's why I do this too." He smiles. "Minus the designer shoes. They all look too uncomfortable for my tastes."

Lois relaxes back in her chair, not wholly convinced. But she's pressed him enough; unlike her other interview subjects, a 38th floor balcony provides him with plenty of escape routes. She'll save some hard questions for her next interview, after she's built up more goodwill. "They are an acquired taste," she agrees, clearly letting the subject go.

The conversation lulls between them, and Lois's stomach growls loudly. She blushes and silently curses her pale complexion that makes her look like a fire hydrant at the drop of a hat.

"Hungry?" Superman asks, amused.

"Not hungry enough to end the interview," she retorts. "So, Superman, what exactly are your powers?"

Superman blinks at the abrupt change in topic. "Are you sure?"

"Yes."

“Because I could –”

“Unless real, human lives are in danger, don’t you dare leave that seat.”

Superman chuckles. “I really don’t think this interview is as important as you’re making it out to be.”

She throws him a piercing look. “Who’s the journalist here, you or me?”

His lips press together like he’s trying not to laugh. After a beat, he concedes, “You are the one with the recorder.”

“Too right,” she says as she double checks it’s still recording. So far so good. “So, powers, Superman?” She scrolls down her notes. “We have you on the record showing incredible feats of strength and speed. You fly, obviously.” She glances back up at him. “But there are reports of… lasers shooting from your eyes last month?” She cocks her head. “Truth or hoax?”

“Truth,” Superman admits. “It’s more like heat vision. I don’t use it often. The intensity can be, well, intense,” he says quietly. “And the chance of collateral damage is often too high in the middle of a fight.”

Lois hums her acknowledgement. “Anything else?”

“I can also see things at a microscopic level,” he says. “And I can freeze things with my breath. I don’t think I’ve used that one in public yet. I have a superhuman sense of smell, and I can see things that are far away in great detail. I also have, um, super-hearing.”

Lois’s eyebrows raise. “Is that all?”

“I also have x-ray vision,” he tacks on. “I can see through most objects.”

“At this point,” Lois says as she heaves an exaggerated sigh, “I’m starting to think you’re messing with me. Super smell, really? Super hearing? X-ray vision?”

“All true,” Superman says with a small laugh.

“Prove it,” Lois says, straightening in her seat. “What color underwear am I wearing?”

Superman swallows.

Lois waits.

Oh my god, did she actually *embarrass* him? The tabloids like to call him Boy Scout, but Lois thought that was mainly for his do-gooder schtick. But, holy shit, he's actually *blushing.*

"Pink," he says in a low voice that sends a round of shivers down her spine. "They're pink, Miss Lane, with lace."

And there goes Lois's blush again, god. She gulps as the embarrassed heat flares in her cheeks. "Um, yes, that's right." She desperately tries to resist the urge to cross her legs, since, clearly, that would do jack shit in the face of literal x-ray vision.

His stares off to the side, deliberately not looking at her, and Lois desperately scrambles for something to say, some question to ask, some words that will magically bring back their easy back and forth.

But in the middle of the thick silence between them, Lois's stomach growls again. Oh, Jesus Christ, just kill her now. She has never been this embarrassed in her *entire fucking life.*

"I really think you could use something to eat," Superman says as he gets to his feet.

Lois gulps down her panic. "But the interview –"

His chair scrapes against the concrete as he pushes it back. "How about I fetch us some dinner?"

"What?"

"Do you like Italian? Or would you prefer Ja – ?" Superman starts, but he might as well be speaking Kryptonian with how well the words penetrate Lois's mind, addled by equal heaps of horniness and hunger. He abruptly turns, facing west, "I have to go."

And then he flies off.

With numb fingers, Lois clicks off her recorder. She exhales a slow breath and stares off her balcony.

She'd just had the biggest interview of her career.

What should she do? Open a bottle of champagne? Call Jimmy Olsen, her favorite intern, to find the perfect photo to go along with the article? Call Clark to lord it over him? She dismisses that thought

almost instantly. No, Lois Lane is better than that. Lois Lane is above petty office jealousy. Lois Lane can be the bigger person (for once).

She checks the time on her phone. Damn, 9:37pm is too late for Jimmy.

Well, might as well get a head start on her article. She has a lot of research ahead.

* * *

An hour later, she jumps at the sound of a throat clearing in front of her. “Miss Lane?” Superman says.

Lois’s jaw drops. “You… came back?”

“I apologize for the wait,” Superman says as he sets a plastic bag down on her patio table, next to her laptop. “A sinkhole opened near a construction site in Tucson, and nobody would have discovered it until morning.”

“So you…” Lois drifts off.

“Filled it for them,” Superman finishes matter-of-factly. “I’ll check back on the construction crew tomorrow, of course. But they should be safe for the time being.”

“Oh,” Lois says faintly. “Yeah, probably.”

Superman nudges the bag towards her, and as she pulls it closer, a heavenly blend of spices hits her nose. “Jesus, what’s in here?” she demands as she rips the paper open.

“A bánh mì from Da Nang,” Superman says as she pulls out two sandwiches. “A few years ago, I rescued the owner’s only child from a monsoon, and ever since they’ve always had a free sandwich or two waiting for me.”

In her notes app, Lois taps out *Vietnam monsoon* to investigate later.

“I ordered one spam and one pork,” he says, with a dip of his head to indicate which is which. “Your choice.”

Lois tosses him the pork and crams the delicious mix of pork shoulder, ham, and food additives in her mouth. God, this brings her back.

Superman’s gaze softens as he watches her eat. He unwraps his own

sandwich with considerably more care.

When she resurfaces, it's with a groan of pleasure. "Oh my god, that is so good."

"One of the best in the city, I was told," Superman says.

She takes another bite, smaller this time, because contrary to what her mother believes, she didn't raise an animal with zero table manners. She swallows before saying, "I grew up on army bases all around the world." She stares down at the messy layers of pickled vegetables, spam, cilantro, and mayo. "On one hand, it was great since I got to try all sorts of foods. On the other, nothing in our kitchen ever really stayed the same – except the spam." She grins sardonically at him.

"I know," Superman says with a little smile.

Lois blinks, unexpectedly yanked out of nostalgia land and into the present. "You do? How?"

Alarm flashes across his face before it smoothes into his usual calm and collected expression. "I read it somewhere."

Lois narrows her eyes as she fights down the spark of pleasure that he was interested enough to read up about her. Because as flattering as that is, it's far more suspicious. "Where?"

Superman shifts in his seat – and Lois can practically taste the lie before he says, "In one of your biographies, I believe?"

"Hm," Lois says as she adds *LL military brat history?* in her notes. Something to look into later. "Definitely not one I wrote," she says as she turns off her phone screen.

"You don't like people knowing about your background?"

Lois scowls. "Not really," she mutters. "My dad's pretty influential in the government and in the military, and some people, in the past, have insinuated that I would not be impartial when it comes to politics or the army."

"That's absurd," he says, sounding almost offended on her behalf.

Lois shrugs. "Joke's on them since I can't stand the guy."

"That's very unfortunate," Superman says, his tone uncomfortably sympathetic.

Lois's gut squirms at her unplanned vulnerability. She should not have said any of that. She's supposed to be interviewing *him.* Not oversharing her daddy issues. But the comfort food put her in a weird mood. So she takes another bite of her sandwich and moves on.

"So, Vietnam – during the rainy season, I presume," Lois says as she clicks on her recorder and tries to keep her chewing sounds to a minimum. "Where else?"

"Excuse me?"

"Monsoon season in East Asia starts in May and ends in October," she says. At his surprised look, she explains, "We spent two years in the Philippines when I was eight. Anyway," she clears her throat, "you were first spotted in Metropolis on April 18th, but there has only been low tropical storm activity in East Asia since then. Not much to warrant Superman's intervention. So, you must have been in Vietnam last year or earlier, sometime between May and October."

Impressed, Superman agrees, "That's right."

"So, where else have you been?"

"All over. Humans," he pauses as he considers his answer, "are fascinating. And I wanted to see everything I could. I spent about a year visiting every continent and most of the countries."

"Doing what?" she asks. "Saving people? Rescuing cats from trees?"

"Mostly," Superman says with a chuckle. "Once, it was a pet guinea pig that escaped in Adelaide." He grins. "But you know I can't resist a cat in a predicament."

She snorts. "So where exactly did you go?"

And Superman… starts talking.

He says more than she's heard in all the news clips she's ever seen combined, and the way his eyes light up as he describes all the people he met – she'll be hunting around her (vast) vocabulary for a way to describe it for a while. She hangs on his every word, entranced by the melodic cadence of his baritone as he describes rural doctors in Argentina, foresters in Sweden, and so many more.

Turns out, they have a near total overlap of places she's lived and cities he's been to. They have an entirely useless but highly

entertaining tangent about the Christmas market in Stuttgart.

“You’ve seemed to make Metropolis your home base, though. You’re seen here most often,” Lois says, gesturing to the skyscrapers around them. “Why Metropolis?”

He meets her gaze head-on. “I like the people here,” he says softly.

“Oh,” Lois says, and there goes her blush again. “We are pretty great.” She grins. “Better than Gotham, for sure.”

“I’ll have to take your word for it,” Superman says diplomatically.

Her smile widens. “Not a fan either?”

Superman sighs. “I’m sure it’s a fine city –”

Lois makes a derisive noise in the back of her throat.

“ – but it seems like Gotham already has a protector. I go where I’m needed, Miss Lane.”

“Have you met Batman?”

“No.”

“Shame. Do you actually live here in Metropolis?” She tries to picture him stopping for a loaded hotdog with all the fixings by Reeve Park or sleeping on top of the Galaxy Building. She fails utterly.

He shakes his head. “My headquarters are in the Arctic. The –” He breaks off, and, oh my god, the tops of his ears go red the longer she stares at him.

“The… what?” she prompts after a beat of silence.

He swallows. Looks away. Glances around like he’s looking for a conveniently high-up cat to distract her. When no such feline appears, he mumbles, “I, um, call it The Fortress of Solitude.”

Lois does *not* laugh. But judging by how his cheeks darken, she doesn’t quite hold in her knee-jerk snicker. She coughs loudly to reset the mood. It does nothing. Carefully, as non-judgmentally as she can, she asks, “Why that name?”

He studies the back half of his sandwich thoughtfully. “It’s one of the few places on Earth I can feel alone.”

Huh. What an unexpected answer. She prods gently, “What do you mean by that?”

“With my super-hearing,” he explains, “a permanent location in a city is… challenging. Up north, I can focus. I can hear everything and nothing.”

She looks hard at his face, lit by the apartment windows around him, throwing the sharp planes of his jaw, nose, and cheeks into sharper relief than the rosy daylight from hours ago. He looks less approachable, more alien, in the dark. After a beat, she says, “That sounds like a lot.”

He shrugs. “A relatively small price for powers like mine.”

“I would go insane if I had to listen to all that crap all the time,” Lois says frankly.

“It’s not bad – not all bad,” Superman amends with a crooked smile. “I’ve overheard some really moving conversations: homecomings, last words, inside jokes between couples who have been together for decades.”

“Too many fake orgasms, I bet,” slips out before Lois can stop herself.

He reddens. “I do not pry into people’s bedrooms –”

“I would hope not.”

Superman shakes his head ruefully. “Please don’t write in The Daily Planet that I regularly eavesdrop on people’s most private moments.”

“Of course not,” Lois says before a wicked grin spreads across her face. She holds up her hands, palms out, and splays her fingers wide. “I can see it now, *‘Superman promises he doesn’t use his super-hearing for illicit purposes.’”*

He sighs. “Please do not write that.”

Lois bursts out laughing.

“Promise me something, though, Miss Lane?” he asks, and Lois shoves down her instinct to agree to anything and everything after hearing her name in *that* voice. “Let Clark Kent review your article before you submit it.”

Lois frowns, but she doesn’t refuse to do it. Instead, she tells him, “I –

I'll think about it."

Superman's mouth lifts into a hopeful smile. "That's all I can ask for."

* * *

After Superman flies off – and gives her the tip that an apartment complex in Bakerline is on fire, cause currently unknown – Lois sits on her balcony in stunned silence for a full five minutes. Absently, she finishes off the rest of her now cold sandwich. She scrolls through her notes and uploads the audio file to her computer, her external hard drive, and the cloud for good measure. There's no goddamn way she's losing a *second* of their conversation.

Lastly, she adds a few observations under her *VITALS* section of her notes. *Drinks and eats. Approx 6'4. Runs hot. Sleeps? tbc.*

After a beat, she adds, *Blushes. Bleeds? tbc.*

Her computer pings with a successful upload, and Lois despairs at the *two hours and twenty-nine minutes* of audio. On one hand, that's about two hours more than she'd ever dreamed she'd get with the Man of Steel. On the other, she only has two hours until The Daily Planet goes to press. She has to call Perry, who will have to persuade Layout to rearrange the entire front section, and she'll have to get in touch with Art for a high-res photo, not to mention Copy, who already holds a grudge against her because of all the misspellings in her last article –

She grabs her phone and scrolls to the C's. With her other hand, she drags the interview file into her transcription program.

"Lois?" A few thumps. A muttered *"darn"* , and Clark sounds clearer as he asks, "May I ask why you're calling?"

Brightly, she says, "I figured it was about time I showed you the ropes around The Planet."

"At, gosh, *midnight?"* he says, flabbergasted.

She gets up from her chair and gathers her things. "Rule number one, Kent: the news never sleeps."

"You certainly don't seem to," Clark grumbles, and Lois grins at the salty note in Mr. Aw-Shucks-Smalltown-Charm.

"I just got the interview of a lifetime," she tells him brusquely. "And

there's a research credit in it for you if you meet me at that 24 hour diner on Waid and 7th Ave in ten minutes."

Clark clears his throat. "Are you asking for my help, Lois?"

"No." Lois scowls. "I am giving you the *opportunity* to help me."

"I see."

Lois flushes as she yanks, hard, at her balcony door. "Look, if you'd rather sleep on the most important story of the *goddamn century,* be my guest. It's your professional funer –"

"Eight sugars," Clark interrupts, "and enough cream to put a dairy farm out of business, right?"

"What the hell are you talking about now?"

"Your coffee order," Clark says, and Lois can practically hear the stupid, knowing smile in his voice. "I'm five minutes away, and I figure I might as well have your coffee waiting."

Lois blinks. "Okay," she says as she rapidly scrambles for her bearings. "Maybe you're not so helpless at this after all, Saltville."

"Smallville," he corrects with a snort. "I'm from *Smallville."*

"Christ, is it, really?" Lois says as she slings her laptop bag over her shoulder and shoves her feet into the closest pair of sandals to her front door. "You're a walking cliche. You know that?"

"Just because –"

Lois pulls her phone away from her ear. "See you in five, Smallville!" She says loudly in the general direction of her phone as she drops it in her bag and strides out the door.

Tomorrow's headline won't write itself, after all.

End Notes

And yes, that is the very first time Lois calls him "Smallville", although it is obviously not the last.

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